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## GLIMPSES INTO SOME LOCAL CHURCHES OF NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

Raymond F. COLLINS

*RÉSUMÉ.* — Le fait que l'église des temps néo-testamentaires était essentiellement une église locale est attesté d'une façon manifeste dans les salutations des épîtres de Paul. Néanmoins, lorsqu'il se met à l'étude de l'église locale du point de vue des textes du Nouveau-Testament, le chercheur rencontre maints problèmes d'ordre méthodologique. Un bref aperçu de 1 Thess, 1-2 Cor, Eph, et des épîtres pastorales nous offre des points de vue divers sur le phénomène de l'église locale néo-testamentaire. De son côté, la littérature johannique témoigne d'une autre vision de l'église locale. Finalement, Luc, dans les sommaires des Actes des Apôtres, nous offre entre autres, une vision idéale de l'église-mère, l'église de Jérusalem.

*SUMMARY.* — That the church of New Testament times was essentially a local church is clearly indicated by the greeting of the Pauline letters. Nevertheless a number of methodological problems confront those who wish to study the phenomenon of the local church by means of an examination of the New Testament texts. A summary examination of 1 Thess, 1-2 Cor, Eph, and the Pastorals offers different insights into the variegated reality of the local church. The Johannine literature provides a still different point of view. Finally, in the summaries of the Acts of the Apostles, Luke provides his readers with an ideal portrait of the mother church, the local church at Jerusalem.

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IN THE OPENING REMARKS of his plenary address during the 1981 Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America, Raymond Brown noted that the category of "local church" is not easily applied to the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> On that occasion, Brown highlighted a number of ambiguities which confront the scholar who studies the topic of the local church in the New Testament. Not only because of the limitation of the available documentation, but also because of the complexity of the subject matter itself, these ambiguities necessarily remain with us. It is,

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1. See Raymond E. BROWN, "New Testament Background for the Concept of Local Church," in *Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Annual Convention, The Catholic Theological Society of America* 36 (1981) 1-14.

nonetheless, possible for us to get a few glimpses into some local churches of the first century, C.E.

#### THE EXISTENCE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

From one point of view, the "local church" is a topic which must be addressed by the interpreter of the New Testament, especially by one who would make an exegesis of Paul's letters. With but two exceptions, each of the indisputably Pauline letters<sup>2</sup> is clearly addressed to a local church. The addressee of five of these letters (Rom, 1-2 Cor, Gal, Phil, 1 Thess, Phlmn) is identified as "church" (*ekklēsia*), indeed a church which is specified by means of a local reference. Nonetheless there is considerable variety in the way in which the apostle designates his addressees. Four distinct patterns<sup>3</sup> may be identified, to which one may add the variant formula found in the greeting of Paul's letters to the Romans and to the Philippians.

The first pattern is found in 1 Thess 1:1, where Paul writes to a "church" which is doubly identified, first by reference to the inhabitants of a place, then by a theological reference. Thus we have: "to the church of the Thessalonians (*tē ekklēsia Thessalonikeōn*)<sup>4</sup> in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The second pattern is found in 1-2 Corinthians, where Paul writes to a church which is identified by means of its location in a given city. The formula consists of 1) the participle of the verb *einai*; 2) the preposition *en*; and 3) the name of the city; thus: "to the church of God which is at Corinth" (*tē ekklēsia tou theou tē ousē en Korinthō*; 1 Cor 1:2, 2 Cor 1:1). A third pattern is found in the letter to the Galatians where Paul writes to the "churches" (in the plural) which are localized within a given area by means of a simple prepositional phrase (rather than a participial clause); thus, "to the churches of Galatia"<sup>5</sup> (*tais ekklēsiais tēs Galatias*) (Gal 1:2). The fourth pattern is found in the letter to Philemon, addressed to three individuals and the church in a house: "To Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house" (*kai tē kai' οικον sou ekklēsia*) (Phlmn 1-2). A fifth pattern, without an explicit use of *ekklēsia*, is found in Rom and Phil. In

2. That is Rom, 1-2 Cor, Gal, Phil, 1 Thess, Phlmn.

3. Even though the authentic Pauline letters offer more than one example of only the second (1-2 Cor) and fifth (Rom, Phil) patterns, one may legitimately speak of patterns because each of the different formulae clearly has the character of a literary formula. Moreover, within the deutero-Pauline literature, 2 Thess 1:1 follows the first pattern while Col 1:2 and Eph 1:1 follow the second pattern. The variant reading of some ancient manuscripts (notably p. 46 and the uncorrected Sinaiticus and Vaticanus codices) omit "at Ephesus" (*en Ephesō*) from Eph 1:1. The RSV translation of Eph follows this shorter reading. The incipits of the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation (Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14) are modeled after the second pattern. The greeting of the Pastoral and Catholic epistles (with the exception of the metaphorical expression of 2 Jn 1) take their inspiration from elsewhere.

4. Comp "the church of the Laodiceans" (*en tē Laodikeōn ekklēsia*) in Col 4:16.

5. For the purposes of the present analysis it matters little whether "Galatia" designates the geographical area of the Roman province of Galatia or the territory of the ancient kingdom of Galatia. For the expression "churches of Galatia," see also 1 Cor 16:1 (cf. 16:19, "the churches of Asia." *hai ekklēsiai tēs Asias*).

these letters Paul addresses a group of persons identified by an adjective and a participial clause which localizes the group, thus, "to all God's beloved in Rome" (*pasin tois ousin en Romē agapētois theou*) (Rom 1:7) and "to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi (*tois ousin en Philippiis*) with the bishops and deacons" (Phil 1:1). Thus, the addressees of all of Paul's authentic letters are identified by means of a local reference, but in two cases the addressees are not specifically designated as "church." The omission of "church" from the greeting of the letter to the Romans is understandable in that Paul had not as yet visited Rome at the time of the letter's composition and so had had no experience of the community's "assembly." The omission of "church" from the greeting of Phil does, however, seem to demand some explanation.

#### METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Since all seven of the certainly authentic Pauline letters are addressed to a community that is locally identified, it would seem legitimate to consider the concept of local church as at least applicable to the Pauline foundations. Yet even when one restricts one's vision to the Pauline witness, matters are not as simple as they might seem upon a first reading of the texts. First of all, the four patterns of designating the addressees as church, and with reference to a given location, differ from one another in such a way that one must ask if they reflect the same concept of church. The formula found in 1 Thess would seem to stress the gathering of the Christian assembly from among the population of Thessalonica<sup>6</sup> rather than its localization in Thessalonica *per se*. The emphasis is more on people than on place. The formula found in 1-2 Cor would seem to suggest the existence of a prototype of church which could then be (re)produced in Corinth. The formula found in Gal surely indicates that it was possible for more than one church to exist in a given area, and that some sort of interrelationship existed among the churches of the area. Finally, the formula found in Phlmn would suggest that the church was gathered in the home of its leading members.<sup>7</sup> Thus the greetings of Paul's letters would incline us to encompass under the single epithet "local church" a local assembly of people, an urban foundation, area churches, and a domestic church.

These various understandings of the "local church" show the complexity of the matter. Nonetheless the texts which have been adduced thus far are among the easiest to examine because of the use of specifically ecclesial terminology and explicit local designations in documents which are manifestly occasional writings and whose literary history is relatively simple. These texts seem to imply that for Paul "the church," though a somewhat equivocal notion, designates a fairly well-identified local community. The impression received from reading Paul's first written words (1 Thess 1:1) is confirmed by further reading from the letter. Paul refers to "the

6. See my "The Church of the Thessalonians," in *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians*. Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Lovaniensium, 66 (Louvain: University Press, 1984) 285-298, pp. 285-289.

7. Perhaps it is preferable to speak of Philemon simply as the leading member of the church which gathered in his home.

churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea" (*tōn ekklēsiōn tou theou tōn ousōn en tē Ioudaia*)<sup>8</sup> (1 Thess 2:14). This expression anticipates the literary expression of the greetings of the Corinthian correspondence, with its three-part formula, and the notion of area churches suggested by the greeting of the letter to the Galatians. The notion that by the use of the term *ekklēsia* Paul intended to identify certain locally-based groups is but slightly troubled by the fact that Paul passes easily from the plural use of the noun *ekklēsia* in 1 Cor 14:33-34<sup>9</sup> to the use of the same noun in the singular number in v. 38.

Given the diversity of evidence offered by the greetings of Paul's authentic letters, it is indeed clear that to the extent that it is applicable at all to the Pauline communities, the notion of "local church" is equivocal rather than univocal. One might even suggest that the concept of "local church" is ambiguous with respect to the authentic Pauline corpus, all the while bearing in mind that the data provided by this corpus is amongst the clearest provided by the entire New Testament with respect to ecclesiological and sociological analysis which are the very types of analysis so important for a concrete and contemporary understanding of the local church.

When, moreover, one takes this diversity with the seriousness which it deserves one becomes immediately aware that one cannot simply speak of the "local church in the New Testament era."<sup>10</sup> The local churches of the New Testament era are pluriform<sup>11</sup> to such an extent that one ought to analyse each of the New Testament documents separately in order to elucidate what it reveals about the community to which it is addressed. The task that theoretically lies at hand, therefore, is to present some twenty-seven more or less singular visions of the local church reflected by the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

Nevertheless a discussion of the complexity of the issue cannot stop with the reflection that one ought ideally to present twenty-seven different visions of the local

8. Similarly, but with a formulation that is similar to the pattern found in Gal 1:2, Gal 1:22 "to the churches of Christ in Judea," literally "to the churches of Judea which (are) in Christ" (*tais ekklēsiais tēs Ioudaias tais en Christo*).

9. Paul is obviously citing the custom of the various local churches as an argument for the practice of the ecclesial silence of women in the church at Corinth. It may be, however, and as many exegetes have suggested, that 1 Cor 14:33-37 is an interpolation into the Pauline text. See, for example, G.W. TROMPF, "On Attitudes Toward Women in Paul and Paulinist Literature: 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 and Its Context," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42 (1980) 193-215. Trompf holds that 1 Cor 14:33b-35, 25 as well as 1 Cor 11:3-16, represents a posthumous interpolation into the Pauline text. If the text of 1 Cor 14:33-37 is authentic, the fact that Paul uses the custom of other churches as an argument for what he considers to be appropriate practice in the church at Corinth is an indication that he saw a similarity among the various local churches. That he has a somewhat abstract concept of church as he writes 1 Cor is already implied in the greeting of 1 Cor 1:1.

In passing, I would note that D.W. Odell-Scott holds 1 Cor 14:33b-36 to be one of the most emphatic New Testament statements for the participation of women in the church's worship. See D.W. ODELL-SCOTT, "Let the Women Speak in Church. An Egalitarian Interpretation of 1 Cor 14:33b-36," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 13 (1983) 90-93.

10. This was the provisional title of my paper. The paper was originally delivered at the Intercontinental Symposium on the Local Church, Bruges, Belgium, June 2-8, 1985.

11. See Edgar KRENTZ, "Fidelity in Variety: Forms of the Church in the New Testament," *Listening* 19 (1984) 73-82.

church if one is to present the local church in the New Testament era. On the one hand, the matter is a bit less complicated insofar as certain analogies can be discerned — for example, among the Pauline communities. Moreover, one might make the analysis required with the help of the idea of a trajectory,<sup>12</sup> and speak of the Pauline, the Johannine, and perhaps the Lukan trajectory of the concept of the local church. The study of the Pauline trajectory of the local church would demand an analysis not only of the authentic Pauline letters, but also of the deutero-Paulines<sup>13</sup> and those other New Testament writings which have been influenced by Paul.<sup>14</sup> This is singularly important. Yet, such an analysis might so focus attention on the evolution of the concept of local church that it might diminish appreciation of each local community's self-understanding in and of itself.

While it might be possible to reduce the complexity of our quest by focusing our emphasis upon analogies and trajectories — albeit not without the possibility of some loss of nuance — the idea that one ought to present some twenty-seven different visions of the local church if one is to do justice to the idea of the local church in the New Testament era is entirely too simple. Some of the longer and more significant New Testament texts are the end result of a complex literary history. This is particularly true of the four gospels, Acts, and Rev. To evaluate these texts adequately, one must analyse them from the vantage points of source- and redaction-criticism. Diachronical analysis would provide insights into the local church not only at the level of the finished, fully edited, text, but also at the level of the source material used by a New Testament writer.<sup>15</sup> This type of analysis would be most significant for the Johannine material.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly useful for a study of the local ecclesiology of the Johannine corpus would be a distinction between the understanding of the local church within the community from which a New Testament writing emerges and the communitarian self-awareness held by those to whom the document is addressed.<sup>17</sup> Analogously one can distinguish between Paul's understanding of the local church and the ecclesial self-awareness of the communities to which he writes.<sup>18</sup> The distinction is especially

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12. See James M. ROBINSON and Helmut KOESTER, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

13. That is Eph, Col, 2 Thess, 1-2 Tim, Ti and Heb.

14. Especially 1 Pet and Rev 2-3.

15. One can, for example, inquire into the ecclesial self-awareness of the community within which the hypothetical Q source was compiled.

16. Most Johannine commentators are attentive to this problematic because of Bultmann's contention that the Gospel of John originally contained no ecclesiology but that an Ecclesiastical Redactor edited the gospel text in such a way as to make it acceptable to the various church communities. Few contemporary authors would accept Bultmann's thesis such as he enunciated it in his great commentary. However most commentators on the gospel of John and the first epistle of John believe that the extant documents are the result of successive editions produced at various significant moments in the history of the Johannine community. See, for example, Raymond E. BROWN, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York-Ramsey: Paulist, 1979).

17. Especially 2 John.

18. While there is little indication that the "opponents" of Paul in 1 Cor, 2 Cor, and Gal identified the group with which they were associated as a "church," it is certain that they envisioned a somewhat

important for those writings which have a polemical or admonitory nature, for instance, 1-2 Cor and Gal. In these instances we are dealing with a contrast of visions of the local church. Finally a distinction must be made between an ideal vision of the local church and the local church as it actually existed. This distinction is especially valuable when one studies the two-part Lukan work. The summaries in Acts which offer so many ecclesiological insights are the results of Luke's editorial work and more often than not represent his ideal ideation of the church rather than offer a description of a local church such as it existed at a given time.

The complexity of the ecclesial awareness evidenced by the various New Testament writings requires me to avoid a monolithic presentation of the local church in the New Testament era. To treat of the topic in such a way as to give due respect to the various facets which deserve attention is beyond the scope of a single essay. A book-length monograph is required in order that the analysis be adequate. As a result, I have chosen as a title of this article "Glimpses into Some Local Churches of New Testament Times." The title reflects not only the fact that I have consciously made a choice among those communities of believers whose existence is attested by the New Testament texts but also the fact that my insights are necessarily presented in rather cursory fashion.

#### THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS

One should begin at the very beginning, with a local community established within a generation of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The church of the Thessalonians established as a result of the preaching of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy at Thessalonica is such a community. Assuredly this church was not the first local church,<sup>19</sup> but it is the church about which we have the oldest documentary evidence.<sup>20</sup> Moreover Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians was written within a relatively short time after the foundation of the church and offers some information about the foundation of the church as well as about its life in the year 50 A.D.

Although Luke's description of the foundation of the church in Thessalonica (Acts 17: 1-9) points to the preaching of Paul in the synagogue as the origin of this Christian community and identifies Jesus' Messiahship as the focal point of the Pauline proclamation,<sup>21</sup> neither this situation nor that focus is particularly highlighted

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cohesive group whose profile would be somewhat other than the profile urged by Paul. I would not be inclined to state that the opponents had a naive understanding of church because they seem to have had a distinctive and reflective consciousness of the nature of the "Christian community."

19. 1 Thess 2: 14 indicates that other churches antedated the church of the Thessalonians with the result that the latter could imitate the former. The reference to these earlier churches is found in a passage whose authenticity is disputed by some authors. See, my *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians*, pp. 27-28; 101-105.

20. The overwhelming consensus of contemporary scholarship maintains that 1 Thess was written in 50 or 51 A.D. and that it is the oldest extant New Testament text. A few authors nonetheless claim that 2 Thess was written by Paul before 1 Thess while some other writers defend the view that Gal was the first letter written by Paul. A few scholars identify Jas as the oldest extant New Testament writing.

21. Acts 17:2-3, 7.

by Paul's own reflection on the foundations of the church of the Thessalonians. The community seems to have been largely drawn from among Hellenistic pagans;<sup>22</sup> Paul's proclamation seems to have focused upon the Lordship of Jesus.<sup>23</sup> The origin of the community is nonetheless related to the proclamation of Paul and his companions at Thessalonica. The church originates in the work of the Spirit since Paul specifically attributes both the proclamation (1 Thess 1:5) and the acceptance of it (1 Thess 1:6) to the work of the Spirit. The Thessalonian church is a spirit-endowed community. It is the God-given spirit which is the enabling force<sup>24</sup> of the characteristic way of life of the Thessalonian Christians (1 Thess 4:8). Moreover the Thessalonian church is one which has to deal concretely with the phenomenon of Spirit-inspired prophecy within it (1 Thess 5:19–21). It may be a bit anachronistic to identify the church at Thessalonica as a charismatically ordered community, but there is no doubt that it is a charismatic community.<sup>25</sup>

If a community can be described as a group of persons bound together by a set of permanent relationships such as to provide a sense of distinctiveness and a sense of identity the church of Thessalonica fully merits the qualification of community. Four types of relationships provide the community with its distinctive identity. Phenomenologically, the community at Thessalonica is in relationship with other Christians. The community has been called into existence by means of its acceptance of the proclamation of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (1 Thess 2:13; see vv. 7, 11). Paul continues to maintain a relationship of some authority with regard to the Thessalonian community. Paul and his companions, moreover, share a common faith with the Thessalonians.<sup>26</sup> In addition, the community enjoys and has followed the example of earlier Christian communities (1 Thess 2:14). It shares with the communities a common faith whose essential content is summed up in the very different credal formulae found respectively in 1:10, 4:14, and 5:9–10. Finally, it would appear that the Thessalonian Christian community functions as an exemplar for other Christian communities to such an extent that one can consider the announcement of the successful evangelization of the Thessalonian to be a constituent element of the Pauline kerygma.<sup>27</sup>

22. 1 Thess 1:9.

23. Unlike "Christ" (*Christos*), "Lord" (*Kurios*) clearly has titular value in 1 Thess. Moreover it is as Lord that Jesus is the awaited one (1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15–17) and it is on the authority of the Lord Jesus that Paul has addressed his paraenetic exhortation to the Thessalonians (1 Thess 4:2).

24. Note the use of the present participle in "God who gives his Holy Spirit to you" (4:8).

25. The language of charism (*charisma*) is not found in 1 Thess. Nonetheless the description of those who are over you (*proïstamenous humōn*) of 5:12 recalls the *ho proïstamenos* of Rom 12:8, just as the mention of prophesying (*prophēteias*) of 5:20 recalls the *prophēteian* of Rom 12:6. In the letter to the Romans each of these gifts is cited within a list of charismatic gifts. In 1 Thess, however, Paul does not give a coordinated profile of the Spirit-endowed activity of the members of the community such as he does in Rom 12; and 1 Cor 12.

26. 1 Thess 4:14. See my "Paul has seen through his own eyes" in *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians*, 175–208, p. 202.

27. 1 Thess 1:8. According to 1 Thess 1:4 the Thessalonians' love for the brethren extends to all those in Macedonia.



Sociologically, the Christian community at Thessalonica is manifestly aware of its distinction from other, non-Christian, groups. This distinction comes to its fullest expression in 4: 12 where Paul concludes his paraenesis with a statement of purpose: "so that you may command the respect of outsiders (*tous exo*), and be dependent on nobody." The outsiders (*hoi exo*) are those at Thessalonica from whom the Thessalonian Christians consider themselves distinct. That the Thessalonian Christians were aware of their specific identity over and against others is intimated even earlier in the letter. In the wish prayer of 1 Thess 3: 11-13, Paul speaks of the Thessalonians' "love for one another and for all men" (*tē agapē eis allēlous kai eis pantas*, v. 12.) thereby distinguishing those bound to "one another" from all the rest. In similar fashion, Paul distinguishes the Thessalonians from "the heathen who do not know God" (*ta ethnē ta mē eidota ton theon*, 4: 5) as he also apparently distinguishes them from the rest who have no hope (*hoi loipoi hoi mē echontes elpida*, 4: 13). In fact the theological characterization of the church in 1: 1 already sets off the Thessalonian Christians from other assemblies.

Distinct from other groups, the Thessalonian Christians are bound to one another by an internal cohesiveness. These bonds can be summed up in the "love of the brethren" about which Paul professes no need to write (4: 9). Love by the members of the community for one another is a distinctive mark of the Thessalonian Christian community. In three different descriptions of the life situation of the Thessalonian Christians Paul focuses on love (1: 3; 3: 6; 4: 9-10). Moreover the love that the Christians extend to one another is a focus of Paul's wish prayer (3: 12) and an object of his eschatological paraenesis (5: 8). Although directed primarily to one another (*eis allelous*), it nonetheless extends to members of the brotherhood beyond the local community at Thessalonica (see 4: 10), indeed to all men (3: 12). The bonds which bind the Thessalonian Christians to one another are called *philadelphia*. The terminology suggests that the Thessalonian Christian church might be called a "brotherhood."<sup>28</sup> The metaphorical use of such terminology belongs to the common register of religious language. Within Judaism and among the pagans, groups of similar religious suasion identified themselves as brothers. In the first letter to the Thessalonians, proportionately more so than in any of his subsequent letters, Paul addresses those to whom he writes as "brothers."<sup>29</sup>

Theologically the church of the Thessalonians was "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1: 1). It was the result of divine election (1: 4). Election was concretized in the proclamation of Paul and his companions. The God who chooses is also the God who calls, the God who is faithful, and the God who gives his Holy

28. Although *philadelphia* is usually rendered "brotherly love," the terminology itself is gender neutral as far as the humans involved are concerned. Hence the term might be translated "sibling love." However, the use of "brotherhood," apparently sexist language, is dictated by Paul's use of *adelphoi* throughout the letter (1: 4; 2: 1, 9, 14, 17; 3: 2, 7; 4: 1, 6, 10, 13; 5: 1, 4, 12, 25, 26, 27). The use of this vocable, in the vocative, should not be so construed as to suggest that the church of the Thessalonians consisted of males only.

29. The term suggests not only the links which bound the Thessalonian Christians to one another, but also the special relationship that existed between Paul and those whom he called "brethren."

Spirit. Thus God who called the church into existence is a God who both demanded that and ensured that the church would show forth its belonging to him, its "holiness." Although Paul did not call the church of the Thessalonians the people of God, his choice of the term "church" to describe a Gentile Christian foundation indicates that it could be understood against the horizon of the *gahal Yahweh*, the idealized community of the Exodus which first merited the qualification *ekklesia*. In a sense, then, this church of radically new beginnings<sup>30</sup> is a church which stands nonetheless in continuity, at least so it was perceived by Paul and his companions, with Israel of old. Yet it was a community which awaited the coming of the Lord Jesus. An almost anxious expectation of the Parousia pervades the entire first letter to the Thessalonians and conveys the impression that the Thessalonian church was well aware of its eschatological condition. Indeed it was aware that it existed in a decisive era, the eschatological moment, because it had already begun to experience eschatological affliction (3:3). Eschatological awareness was a key feature in the self-understanding of the Thessalonian church.<sup>31</sup>

The use of technical terminology and striking metaphors to describe the church of the Thessalonians is noticeably absent from Paul's first letter.<sup>32</sup> The sole term which falls into the former category is the name "church" itself. Appropriated from the mother church at Jerusalem, the term, as used by Paul in 1 Thess, continues to evoke the notion of an assembly. The Thessalonian church was assembled for the hearing of the proclamation; it was assembled again for the reading of Paul's letter. The liturgical greeting with which the letter begins is an indication of the fact that the letter was read in a quasi-cultic setting.<sup>33</sup> Does that mean that 1 Thess served as a prelude to the synaxis, as some authors would hold?<sup>34</sup> The evidence is too meager to allow for a decision on this issue but there can be no doubt that the church assembled to hear the word of God which it had received from Paul, both orally and by letter. As there are no explicit references to the eucharistic celebration in 1 Thess, so there are no explicit baptismal references. Some authors believe that a baptismal catechesis lies behind the eschatological paraenesis of 5:1–11.<sup>35</sup> The position is not to be

30. See my *Studies*, p. 287.

31. See F. LAUB, *Eschatologische Verkündigung und Lebensgestaltung nach Paulus. Eine Untersuchung zum Wirken des Apostles beim Aufbau der Gemeinde in Thessalonike*. Biblische Untersuchungen, 10 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1973). The eschatological situation of the church at Thessalonica is one of the main focuses of attention in the current literature on 1 Thess. See my *Studies*, p. 58.

32. There is an extensive literature on the Pauline images for the church. Among recent English language literature, see R.Y.K. FUNG, "Some Pauline Pictures of the Church," *Evangelical Quarterly* 53 (1981) 89–107; D.R. DENTON, "Further Reflections on 'Some Pauline Pictures of the Church,'" *Evangelical Quarterly* 54 (1982) 147–149; J. RENARD, "Temple and Building: Pauline Images of Church and Community," *Review for Religious* 41 (1982) 419–431; George S. WORGUL, Jr., "People of God, Body of Christ: Pauline Ecclesiological Contrasts," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 12 (1982) 24–28. Denton suggests that all the common metaphors feature key elements in the apostle's teaching, especially the unity, holiness, and growth of the church. Worgul stresses that the people of God image emphasises a salvation history note, whereas "body of Christ" highlights Paul's originality in reflecting on the reality of the Christian church.

33. See also 5:27.

34. See James M. GIBBS, "Canon Cuming's 'Service-Endings in the Epistles.' A Rejoinder," *New Testament studies* 24 (1977–1978) 545–547.

35. For a discussion, see my "1 Thess and the Liturgy of the Early Church," in *Studies*, 136–153, pp. 142–153.

adopted without further discussion, but even a reserved author like Spicq has suggested that there is a reference to baptismal catechesis in the expression "taught by God to love one another," of 4:9.<sup>36</sup>

Paul's first letter does not state where it was that the church assembled. However it does indicate that there was a ministry of service and leadership which was exercised within the community: "But we beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you" (5:12). As the letter continues, Paul exhorts the Thessalonian Christians to "admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all" (v. 14). These two exhortations indicate that the members of the Thessalonian church were called to care for the community. By exercising their respective ministries of service, the Thessalonians were "building up" the church. Among them one group had the special function of caring for the community,<sup>37</sup> but there was not a distinction between higher and lower officers, nor between helpers and leaders. All were to be involved in the function of building up the church.

#### THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

Some four or five years after he wrote his first letter, Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians in which he translates his theology into an illumination of the existence of the church and of the individual Christians within it. It is the real life situation of the church, fractured and torn asunder by an enthusiastic movement, which prompted the letter. To a large extent the epistle is Paul's response to the situation at Corinth such as it has been described to him; to an equally large extent the letter consists of a series of responses to specific questions coming from the division-torn Corinthians.

Although divisions exist within the church at Corinth, the church — and it is significant that Paul uses the singular to address the divided group — is well aware of its distinct identity. The church at Corinth, like that of the Thessalonians, is addressed as "brothers"<sup>38</sup> but the church is also qualified as "the saints" (*hoi hagioi*) in the very greeting of the letter.<sup>39</sup> While this language identifies the church at Corinth as belonging to God, a point that Paul wishes to underscore in the letter as he attempts to show that belonging to the church implies an allegiance to God which transcends any merely human allegiance, it also sets the church at Corinth off from those who are not to be numbered among the elect. Those from whom the Corinthian Christians have a distinct identity are variously called the unrighteous (*adikoi*),<sup>40</sup>

36. C. SPICQ, *Agape in the New Testament, II. Agape in the Epistles of St. Paul* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1965) p. 18.

37. See Josef HAINZ, *Ekklesia: Strukturen paulinischer Gemeinde-Theologie und Gemeinde-Ordnung. Biblische Untersuchungen*, 9 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1972) pp. 37–41.

38. For example, at 1 Cor 1:10.

39. 1 Cor 1:2. See also 1 Cor 6:1.

40. See 6:1, 9–11.

unbelievers (*apistoi*),<sup>41</sup> outsiders (*idiōtai*),<sup>42</sup> and those “least esteemed by the church.”<sup>43</sup> These various ways of emphasizing the distinctiveness of the church<sup>44</sup> would appear to be a Pauline device used to focus his readers’ attention on what it means to belong to the church.

Paul often alludes to his own relationship to the church in Corinth, most significantly in 1 Cor 3:5–17,<sup>45</sup> a passage in which Paul strikingly uses two traditional metaphors to describe the situation of the church. The first metaphor is that of the field (*geōrgion*), planted by Paul but watered by Apollos. Nonetheless the growth that takes place is twice referred to God. The double-mention of God in vv. 5–6 rules out any self-glorification on the part of Paul and Apollos,<sup>46</sup> and prepares the way for Paul’s affirmation that the church is God’s field (v. 9). The second metaphor is that of the building (*theou oikodomē*). Paul affirms that he has laid the foundation like the skilled builder (*hos sophos architekton themelion ethēka*). The accent, however, lies on God since the building belongs to God and Paul has laid the foundation “according to the grace of God given to me” (*kata tēn charin tou theou ten dotheisan moi*, v. 10). Paul, moreover, emphasizes that he himself is not the foundation by his forthright affirmation that Jesus Christ is the foundation (v. 11). Although the language is metaphorical it is clear that Paul is at once affirming his own authority with regard to the Corinthian church and recalling his foundational activity with regard to it. The activity by which he founded the community was his proclamation of the Gospel, a proclamation whose object was the crucified Christ. Paul is, moreover, insistent on distinguishing his proclamation of the gospel as the foundational element in the life of the church at Corinth from his occasional baptismal activity.<sup>47</sup>

After describing the church at Corinth as a field and as a building, Paul adds a third metaphor, that of the temple. The church is God’s temple (*naos theou*, v. 16).<sup>48</sup> The metaphor is new insofar as the notion is no longer that of God’s building but that of his indwelling. By means of a statement phrased in the form of a sentence of holy law (v. 17a), Paul has emphasized his radical eschatological understanding of the community. The point of comparison in the metaphor itself and the linchpin of Paul’s eschatological perception is the presence of the Holy Spirit within the Corinthian church. It is the Holy Spirit which constitutes the Corinthian community as church, not only insofar as the Spirit is the source of the revelation which grounds

41. 1 Cor 6:6; 10:26; 14:23–24.

42. 1 Cor 14:23–24.

43. 1 Cor 6:4.

44. Wayne A. Meeks writes, in this regard, of the language of belonging and the language of separation. See W. A. MEEKS, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University, 1983) pp. 85, 94–95.

45. See William F. ORR — James Arthur WALTHER, *I Corinthians*. Anchor Bible, 32 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976) pp. 171–174.

46. Thus Hans CONZELMANN, *I Corinthians*. Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) pp. 73–74.

47. See especially, 1 Cor 1:17.

48. The metaphor of the temple is otherwise employed at 1 Cor 6:19.

Paul's proclamation but also insofar as the Spirit is the principle of church order within the community. In several different ways the first letter to the Corinthians focuses upon the idea that the church is the work of the Spirit of God.

It is, of course, preeminently in chapters 12–14<sup>49</sup> where the *topos* is *ta pneumatika* that the role of the Spirit in the building up of the Church<sup>50</sup> comes most clearly to the fore. These three chapters offer the most extensive exposition on the spiritual gifts in the entire New Testament. While proper exegesis of the three chapters would take us far beyond the purposes of the present essay, the Pauline emphasis clearly lies as much upon the diversity of charisms as upon their common source and common purpose. The diversity of charisms is manifest when one considers that in chapter twelve Paul gives three lists of charisms, respectively containing nine (vv. 7–10), eight (v. 28) and seven (vv. 29–30) gifts. Nonetheless the total number of different gifts cited by the apostle in these lists is only thirteen. There are only three gifts which appear on all three lists.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand Paul repeatedly emphasizes that these several gifts are manifestations of the same Spirit. The one Spirit is the source of the various gifts. Among the gifts charity enjoys primacy insofar as it is the fundamental gift of which the other gifts are so many diverse expressions. Thus the charisms which are phenomenologically characterized by their diverse manifestations are as one in their source as well as in their purpose. That purpose is the building up of the Church as the body of Christ. Indeed the essential principle of church order in 1 Cor would seem to be charismatic unity in diversity. As a matter of fact each member of the Corinthian community can accurately be described as a charismatic since "the Spirit apportions to each one individually as he wills" (12:11).

Paul takes pains to emphasize the complementarity of the several charisms, and is loathe to rank one charismatic gift above another. He is especially concerned with placing the highly esteemed gift of tongues in a perspective such that its complementarity to other gifts and its subordination to the upbuilding of the church can be appreciated. In the second of the three lists (i.e. v. 28) Paul suggests a hierarchy of charisms as he enumerates apostles, prophets, and teachers. The primacy of the apostolate is almost self-evident<sup>52</sup> insofar as it is the charism of founding a church, yet the apostolate is not cited in the first of Paul's lists (vv. 7–10) where Paul

49. See E. KÄSEMANN, "Ministry and Community in the New Testament," in *Essays on New Testament Themes*. Studies in Biblical Theology, 41 (London: SCM, 1964) pp. 63–94; Karl KERTELGE, *Gemeinde und Amt im Neuen Testament*. Biblische Handbibliothek (Munich: Kosel Verlag, 1972) pp. 103–126; and Ralph P. MARTIN, *The Spirit and Congregation: Studies in 1 Corinthians 12–15* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

50. For H. Brattgard the charismatic element belongs to the very essence of the church. See H. BRATTGARD, "Den nytestamentliga pneumatologin och det karismatiska," *Tidsskrift för Teologi og Kirke* 51 (1980) 177–180.

51. I.e. prophecy, healing, and the gift of tongues.

52. Its place in the hierarchy of charisms was reaffirmed by the anonymous author of the letter to the Ephesians who lists the apostolate in the first place (Eph 4:4) even if he does not enumerate the charisms as such.

specifically reflects on the charisms enjoyed by members of the Corinthian community. The second of the enumerated charisms is prophecy. Since this charism was also extant in the community of Thessalonica<sup>53</sup> and is cited by Paul's disciple in Eph 4:11 one might conclude that the presence of a charismatic prophet was a feature of the Pauline foundations.

In Paul's vision the unity of the church at Corinth ultimately results from the Spirit. While the Spirit is the foundation of the Church's unity, it is obviously not the only unifying factor. One must also affirm that the Corinthians' espousal of monotheism<sup>54</sup> is a constitutive element of the unity which ought to obtain among them. There is "one God," who inspires the charisms in each one. The Christian community at Corinth had appropriated Jewish monotheism, indeed in such a way that the community would be recognized as "the church of God," reflecting the biblical designation of Israel as the assembly of Yahweh (*gahal Yahweh*). The unity of the church is also rooted in its acceptance of Jesus as (only) Lord. The acclamation that "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor 12:3) proceeds from the lips of spirit-endowed Christians as does the traditional plea, *Marana tha*, "Come, Lord" (1 Cor 16:22). The foundational gospel which Paul preached had Christ crucified as its object.

Some authors maintain that it is misunderstanding of the resurrection of Jesus which stood at the root of the troubles which disturbed the Corinthian communities. Paul explicitly responds to that issue in chapter 15 which he opens with a reminder of a traditional credal formula. The common tradition, focusing principally upon the death and resurrection of Jesus, was another unifying factor for the Corinthian Christians. The commonly held tradition also conveyed the memory of a meal which Jesus had celebrated with his disciples. Explicit references to this meal, the *kuriakon deipnon* (1 Cor 11:20) are found only in 1 Cor 11:17-34 and 10:14-22. Paul cites the Eucharistic tradition in order to address certain conflicts which had arisen within the church.<sup>55</sup> The conflicts attest to a manifest social disparity among the Corinthian community. Paul brings forward the Eucharistic as a ritually enacted plea for unity within the community because he sees the supper as "a ritual of solidarity."<sup>56</sup> The ritual keeps in mind the memory of the death of Jesus,<sup>57</sup> which also functions as one of the central motifs of the rite of baptism. Allusions to baptism abound in 1 Cor 1-4, where the presence of the formulaic "in the name of" suggests that this language was not only commonplace in Christian worship but also key to the baptismal ritual itself.

Two other features of the church at Corinth deserve mention even in a presentation as brief as this. The one is the Christian ethos to which Paul appeals

53. 1 Thess 5:19.

54. See Wayne A. MEEKS, *op. cit.*, 165-183.

55. See Gerd THEISSEN, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982).

56. See W.A. MEEKS, *op. cit.*, p. 157; M. GOURGUES, "Eucharistie et communauté chez saint Paul et les Synoptiques," *Église et théologie* 13 (1982) 57-78; and Elisabeth SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, "Tablesharing and the Celebration of the Eucharist," *Concilium* 152 (1982) 3-12.

57. See Fernand HAHN, "Herrengedächtnis und Herrenmahl bei Paulus," *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 32 (1982) 166-177.

throughout the letter. It is indicative that Paul appeals to the beginnings, his proclamation of the gospel and their baptism, as he makes his appeals. In his reflections on *porneia* and the settling of disputes in chapters five and six it is clear that Paul expects both that the Christians at Corinth maintain certain standards of conduct and that the assembly itself deal with violations of these standards as they arise.<sup>58</sup> It is the nature of the community as such which dictates that *porneia* should be banished from its midst<sup>59</sup> and that judicial disputes be settled among the brethren.

These standards are not only incumbent upon the church at Corinth, for Paul had sent Timothy to the Corinthians to remind them of his ways in Christ, "as I teach them everywhere in every church" (*kathōs pantachou en pasē ekklēsia didaskō*, 1 Cor 4:17). Similarly, Paul cites not only his own practice but also the practice of the churches of God as he offers his advice on the matter of a woman's head covering during worship. "We recognize," he says, "no other practice, nor do the churches of God" (*hēmeis toiautēn sunētheian ouk echomen oude hai ekklēsiai tou theou*, 1 Cor 11:16).

If a common ethos characterizes the several churches of God, a special bond of solidarity exists between the church at Corinth and the mother church of Jerusalem. Hence the contribution for the saints (of Jerusalem), collected on the first day of the week (1 Cor 16:2). The collection had social and theological significance, summarized by Keith Nickle<sup>60</sup> as an act of Christian charity among fellow believers motivated by the love of Christ, an act expressing the solidarity of the Christian fellowship by presenting irrefutable evidence that God was calling Gentiles to faith, and an eschatological pilgrimage of the Gentile Christians to Jerusalem by which the Jews were to be confronted with the undeniable reality of the divine gift of saving grace to the Gentiles and thereby be themselves moved through jealousy to finally accept the gospel. In sum, the church at Corinth was not an isolated phenomenon; it was not an entity until itself.<sup>61</sup>

On the other hand — and this is the second additional feature which deserves mention — the church at Corinth was characterized by an organic unity. The very use of the body-of-Christ imagery, a metaphor whose Corinthian configuration drew from the Hellenistic use of the similitude, the Hebraic notion of corporate personality,

58. See W.A. MEEKS, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–129.

59. Victor C. Pfitzner holds, nonetheless, that the primary purpose of the procedure is reconciliation rather than concern for the neo-levitical nature of the community. See V.C. PFITZNER, "Purified Community — Purified Sinner. Expulsion from the Community according to Matthew 18:15–18 and 1 Corinthians 5:1–5," *Australian Biblical Review* 30 (1982) 34–55.

60. Keith F. NICKLE, *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy*. Studies in Biblical Theology, 48 (London: SCM, 1966) p. 142. On the ecclesial significance of the collection, see also Josef HAINZ, *Koinonia: "Kirche" als Gemeinschaft bei Paulus*. Biblische Untersuchungen, 16 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1982) pp. 123–161.

61. Robert Morgan makes the point, which he perhaps overstates, that the most fundamental presupposition of New Testament ecclesiology is that the church is one. The local communities belong to a larger whole. See R. MORGAN, "The One Fellowship of Churches in the New Testament," *Concilium* 144 (1981) 27–33.

and the Christian practice of the Eucharistic,<sup>62</sup> suggests that the type of unity which Paul envisioned for the Christians at Corinth was an organic one. Paul's emphasis on the ultimate unity and complementarity of the different charisms enjoyed by the members of the community makes the same point.

These members "assemble as a church" (*sunerchomenōn hūmōn en ekklēsia*, 1 Cor 11:17). Paul had taught in houses and had baptized households.<sup>63</sup> It was Christian households which provided support for itinerant Christian missionaries. The *incipit* of the letter to Philemon acknowledges the existence of a household church<sup>64</sup> as does the finale of the first letter to the Corinthians, where Paul extends greetings on the part of the church in the house of Aquila and Prisca (1 Cor 16:19). According to Werner Vogler, it was the household church which provided the basic structure of the early Christian communities in Judea and Galilee. The house church was the locus of Christian initiation, the assembly place for the Eucharist, prayer, and catechesis, a locale for Christian fellowship, a base and support for mission — the basic cell indeed of the Christian church.

Jewish domestic synagogues in the Diaspora provided a model for the establishment of the house church by the Christian missionary movement. The household provided a strong analogue for the *ekklēsia* itself. Indeed the diffusion of household codes throughout the New Testament would seem to indicate that the household was a key element in ecclesial structuring.<sup>65</sup> The number of Christians who could gather in a single house was necessarily quite limited. Thus the house church as the basic unit of Christian organization would seem to have had a limited membership.<sup>67</sup> In such circumstances it is not unlikely that in some of the larger cities there may have existed more than one house church.<sup>68</sup> The existence of several different house churches in the cosmopolitan community at Corinth might have had a considerable role to play in the disturbance which existed among the Christians of the city. Nonetheless it is also quite likely that in the larger cities where there existed several

62. See P. DACQUINO, "La chiesa 'corpo del Cristo,'" *Rivista Biblica* 29 (1981) 315–330; and G. WORGUL, *art. cit.*

63. See 1 Cor 1:16; comp Acts 16:15, 32–34; 18:8.

64. The formula occurs in 1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:5; Phlm 1; and Col 4:15. See Hans-Josef KLAUCK, "Die Hausgemeinde als Lebensform im Urchristentum," *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift* 32 (1981) 1–15 (in English language summary, "The House Church as a Way of Life," *Theology Digest* 30 (1982) 153–157); *Hausgemeinde und Hauskirche in frühen Christentum*. Stuttgarter Bibelstudien, 103 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1981) pp. 21–47; and Wayne A. MEEKS, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

65. W. VOGLER, "Die Bedeutung der urchristlichen Hausgemeinde für die Ausbreitung des Evangeliums," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 107 (1982) 785–794, c. 786.

66. See F.V. FILSON, "The Significance of the Early House Churches," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 58 (1939) 103–112 and the occasional reflections in two more recent studies: David L. BALCH, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*. Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, 26 (Chico (CA): Scholars Press, 1981) and David C. VERNIER, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, 71 (Chico (CA): Scholars Press, 1983).

67. Klauck estimate a group of ten to forty persons. See also Jerome MURPHY-O'CONNOR, *St. Paul's Corinth. Texts and Archaeology*. Good News Studies, 6 (Wilmington (DE): Glazier, 1983) pp. 153–161, and "The Corinth That Saint Paul Saw," *Biblical Archaeologist* 47 (1984) 147–159, p. 157.

68. See 1 Cor 14:23 (perhaps 11:20 as well) and Rom 16:23.



Christian house churches at least some of these assembled together from time to time. Indeed Gaius,<sup>69</sup> Christian patron, and host to Paul, seems to have welcomed more than one house church in his home (Rom 16:23).

#### THE SAINTS WHO ARE AT EPHESUS

The existence of the house church in the Pauline foundations is a reality to which a fair amount of contemporary scholarly interest has been devoted.<sup>70</sup> The phenomenon deserves ample consideration in any exposition of the local church during New Testament times. It is only our interest in obtaining glimpses as diverse as possible into the local churches of that era which allows us to abandon the topic of the house church in order to take a peak at the local church through the eyes of authors who have written other works which lie within the Pauline ambit, namely, the letter to the Ephesians and the Pastoral epistles. These documents deserve special consideration since they are the texts which proportionately give the church the greatest preponderance of topical consideration within the entire Pauline collection. Nonetheless their respective points of view differ considerably from one another.

The ecclesial interest of the letter to the Ephesians is evident at the close of the first chapter (Eph 1:22-23) when the author of the letter uses *ekklēsia* to denote the people of God, hitherto indicated by the first person plural and the adjectival noun *hagioi* ("saints").<sup>71</sup> Among exegetes it is commonly accepted that with the use of the term *ekklēsia* the author of Eph primarily intended to designate the universal church. Nonetheless the document is intended for a local community and what is said about the universal church also has applicability to the local community.

If there is a universal role attributed to the church in Eph it devolves upon the church as servant, i.e. insofar as it is to make manifest the presence of the loving and powerful God. This role is explicitly attested in Eph 3:10 where the unparalleled phrase, "through the church" (*dia tes ekklēsias*) indicates that the church's function is to take up and extend Christ's prophetic ministry. Indeed the author of Ephesians uses the language of growth (only) with regard to the church since the church exists for the glorification of God and the revelation of his active presence in the world.

If the use of language which was later appropriated by the Christian tradition is not totally anachronistic, then one might affirm that the author of Eph has a sacramental vision of the church. Not only does he use the image of the body to describe the church, but he also indicates that the church is dependent upon Christ as the head is dependent upon the body, according to the typical physiological understanding of antiquity. As Christ's body, the church is Christ's self-manifestation.

69. See 1 Cor 1:14.

70. For example, in addition to the studies cited in note 63, Robert BANKS, *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in their Historical Setting* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1980); Elisabeth SCHLÜSSER FIORENZA, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983) pp. 160-204; R. AGUIRE, "La casa como estructura base del cristianismo primitivo: las iglesias domesticas," *Estudios eclesíasticos* 58 (1984) 27-51.

71. Eph 1:1, 4, 15, 18.

It is "in Christ Jesus" (*en Christō Iēsou*, Eph 2:13) that the church "happens." The union between Christ and the church is likewise expressed in the liturgical formula found at 3:20-21, "... to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus (*en tē ekklēsia kai en Christō Iēsou*) for all generations."<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless the church and Christ are not simply to be identified with one another as the image of Christ as bridegroom and the church as bride in Eph 5:25-32 indicates.<sup>73</sup>

The church is, however, not an amorphous grouping. The letter's patronymic Paul,<sup>74</sup> incorporated within the first person plural of the letter's later verses, retains his individuality over and against the other members of the church, as we see, for example, in the Pauline prayer of 1:13-23. Singularly important are the apostles and prophets who serve as the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20). In 1:11-13 it is clear that "we" is contrasted with "you." The historic distinction between Jew and Gentile, now reconciled in Christ Jesus, remains recognized even within the context of their reconciliation.<sup>75</sup> In the words of Markus Barth, "the 'one new man' is by origin and constitution a community of several persons. He is not an individual, or a conglomeration of identical individuals. He is an organic body consisting of distinct members, not an amalgamation; a social structure, not a shapeless mass."<sup>76</sup>

Indeed the social status of the members of the community is even reinforced by their being "in Christ" as the household code of Eph 5:22-6:13 clearly indicates. The organic constitution of the church is Christ-endowed. The ministries within the church are given by Christ: "grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift" (*eni de hekastō hēmōn edothē hē charis kata to metron tes dōreas tou Christou*, Eph 4:7). In this respect the ministry of the postulated Paul serves somewhat as a paradigm. The author writes: "you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you" (*tēn oikonomian tēs charitos tou theou tēs dotheises moi eis humas*, Eph 3:2). It is, of course, Eph 4:11-13 which serves as the *locus classicus* for the letter's exposition of church order.<sup>77</sup> Its disquisition on the charisms is dependent upon Paul's own statements on the subject, yet there are some

72. See Markus BARTH, *Ephesians 1-3*. Anchor Bible, 34 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974) p. 375.

73. According to Barth, the "authentic summary of the ecclesiology of Ephesians [= 5:24] contradicts and excludes once and for all the notion that the term 'body of Christ' implies a (mystical) identify of the church with Christ." See M. BARTH, *Ephesians 4-6*, Anchor Bible, 34a (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974) p. 620. In an analysis of the ecclesiology of Eph 5:21-33, E. Cothenet has indicated that as *sponsa Christi* the Church's life is one of loving submission to Christ. He also suggests that the nuptial imagery belonged to the common catechesis of the early church. See E. COTHENET, "L'Église, épouse du Christ" (Eph 5; Apoc 19 et 21), in A.M. TRIACCA and A. PISTOIA, eds., *L'Église dans la liturgie. Conférences Saint-Serge. XXVI<sup>e</sup> Semaine d'Études Liturgiques* (Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 1980) pp. 81-106; and Ceslas SPICQ, *Thalpo*, in *Notes de lexicographie néo-testamentaire*, 1. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, 22/1 (Fribourg-Göttingen: Éditions universitaires — Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978) pp. 365-366.

74. In my judgment the letter to the Ephesians is not to be counted among the extant authentic letters of Paul.

75. See Eph 2:14-16.

76. M. BARTH, *Ephesians 1-3*, p. 310.

77. The larger context, i.e. Eph 4:1-16, a passage to which Barth gives the title "The Constitution of the Church," has been examined by H.P. HAMMAN, in "Church and Ministry: An Exegesis of Ephesians 4:1-16," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 16 (1982) 121-128.

differences with regards to the specifics of the respective expositions. One should certainly note that the four or five ministries cited in 4: 11 are enabling ministries : i.e. that they enable all and each of the saints to fulfill the task which is theirs. In this way the church fulfills its task and attains to the goal set out for it (4: 12). Mention of this goal, as the earlier remark apropos the growth of the church, brings to mind that the author of Ephesians has an eschatological vision of the church. In order for the church to be God's house, God's temple, it is dependent upon the future gift and work of Christ.

The language which describes the church as "a holy temple in the Lord" (*naon hagion en kuriō*, Eph 2: 21) belongs to the cultic register. While Ephesians does not provide its reader with an order of worship, it is clear that it is replete with liturgical allusions.<sup>78</sup> Beyond the already mentioned prayer in 1: 13-23 and the liturgical fragment of 3: 20-21, I will mention only three additional elements among the many that could be cited. First of all, the outside verses of 3: 13-18 contain terms denoting liturgical assembly in such a manner that a liturgical setting forms an *inclusio* for the entire pericope. Its content focuses upon the theme of Jesus as high priest and victim in a fashion not entirely dissimilar to that of Heb. Secondly, in 5: 18-20 the vocal outpourings of the community gathered in assembly, their "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" (*en psalmois kai humnois kai ōdais pneumatikais*, 5: 19) are attributed to the Spirit as to their source. Although addressed to the Lord, they have ostensibly an intramural purpose insofar as they are addressed to another. Thirdly, the letter to the Ephesians makes several allusive references to baptism. That there is but one baptism appears in the credal recollection of Eph 4: 3. While one must see in 5: 26-27 metaphorical reference to nuptial rites, allusions to Christian baptism cannot be summarily dismissed from the epistle's perspective.<sup>79</sup> Finally in Eph 6: 10-16 one can discern some elements of a baptismal catechesis.

If Eph provides the discerning reader with some glimpses into church order and worship among the Christians of first century Ephesus, it also provides some traces of credal formulae, principally in 4: 4-6. It is probable that the author of Eph himself compiled the credal elements that are found in sequence in this passage. The language of v. 6 is traditional, ultimately reflecting the Jewish *shema* (Deut 6: 4-6). In context, however, the unity of God — albeit a traditional motif — receives singular emphasis insofar as unity is the attribute underscored by the author in his citation of the other credal elements. In the author's vision it would appear that the unity of God provides the basis of motivation for the unity of the church.

Still another aspect of the view of the local church provided by Eph that needs mention is that of its distinctive ethos. The exhortation of 5: 3-5 suggests that not only must a distinction be made between good and evil deeds, but also that the life of the saints is different from those who have no share in the inheritance of the

78. Barth seems almost to suggest that it is the church's function of worshipping God which comes to the fore as one concentrates on the ecclesiology of Eph. Summarizing the letter's teaching, he states: "The church's function is now described not only in terms of its worship of God, its service to its members, and its mission among Jews and Gentiles". See M. BARTH, *Ephesians 1-3*, p. 33.

79. See M. BARTH, *Ephesians 4-6*, p. 694.

kingdom. The idea of a difference in conduct comes to even clearer expression in the paraenesis of 5:15, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise."<sup>80</sup> The household code of 5:23-6:9 suggests at least that there is a Christian motivation for fulfilling ethically the responsibilities of one's social function. Finally in 4:2-3 the author of Ephesians cites what have been described as the "six constituents for the common life," to wit, "lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

#### THE PASTORALS

Situated at another point, or points, on the Pauline trajectory are the Pastoral epistles. Pseudonymous, they are presumably addressed to the leaders of church communities in Ephesus and Crete and can therefore be presumed to offer much by way of reflection on the local church. For almost two centuries these three letters, 1-2 Tim, Ti, have been described as "the pastoral epistles" because they are ostensibly addressed to pastors offering them apostolic advice as to how they should conduct their respective pastoral ministries. While there are obviously differences among the three letters, even differences bearing upon the topic of this paper, they can be grouped together because of their manifest similarities and their common theme which is none other than church order.

As a point of departure, we can take the "word concerning the church"<sup>81</sup> in 1 Tim 3:14-16. The pericope speaks of "the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (v. 15). Reflecting the terminology of fixed liturgical language, possibly of a Jewish-Hellenistic type, the fragment designates the assembly itself as "the household of God," but does not further exploit the metaphor. Instead it extols the church by expressing the idea that the tradition, which is the mystery of our religion, is expressed and exercised in the liturgy.

Indeed liturgy and tradition are two of the principal concerns of the Pastorals. In them Paul is cited as the authoritative figure for the correct celebration of the liturgy.<sup>82</sup> Timothy, his presumed successor, is charged with responsibility for the public reading of the Scriptures and for preaching. Real widows are exhorted to continue in supplications and prayers. It is, nonetheless, in 1 Tim 2:1-15 that the Pastorals liturgical concern receives concerted attention. Gottfried Holtz interprets vv. 1-7 as a "eucharistic prayer."<sup>83</sup> Stated as such, his view seems to me to attribute a

80. See Also Eph 5:2 for a distinctively Christian paraenetic exhortation.

81. So-called by Martin Dibelius in M. DIBELIUS — H. CONZELMANN, *The Pastoral Epistles*. Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972) p. 60.

82. See R. F. COLLINS, "The Image of Paul in the Pastorals," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 31 (1975) 147-174, pp. 164-165.

83. See Gottfried HOLTZ, *Die Pastoralbriefe. Theologisch Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 13 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1965) p. 92.

precision which the text itself does not warrant, yet it is clear that the passage reflects liturgical traditions and offers norms for worship. Among others, two points can be singled out for specific mention, namely, the respective roles attributed to men and women in the Christian liturgical assembly, and the fact that correct prayer must have a universal reference. With the exhortation "that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanks-givings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way" (vv. 1-2), the author banishes a gnosticising exclusivism as an authentic form of Christian prayer.

As for the tradition of the church, the Pastorals' concern for sound teaching is underscored by the frequently repeated formula, "This saying is sure" (*pistos ho logos*).<sup>84</sup> Thereby the letters concern for orthodoxy is indicated. According to the vision expressed in the Pastorals it is Paul, the apostle *par excellence*, who serves as the guarantor of the soundness of church doctrine. From the way in which the Pastorals treat the figure of Paul one gathers the impression not only that the church is an apostolic foundation but also that it is of the essence of the church to faithfully transmit apostolic teaching. This concern receives expression in the author's formulation of traditional teaching and his portrayal of the figures of Timothy and Titus, described as the "children" of Paul<sup>85</sup> and charged with responsibility for handing on his teaching. Indeed the ministry of teaching<sup>86</sup> seems to be preeminent among the tasks of the pastors of the church.

That task is, however, not their only one. The recipients of the letters have responsibility for church order. In this regard we must not only consider the pastors' responsibility for liturgical order and community structures and institutions but also the fact that they are urged to maintain a Christian ethos within the community. Three passages can be cited to illustrate the point. In the pericope on widows, 1 Tim 5:3-16, the author writes of "growing wanton against Christ" and "giving the enemy occasion to revile the church" and cites "gadding about from house to house," "being a busy body," and "being idle" as cases in point while he extols hospitality and works of service as recognizable good deeds. In Ti 2:1-10 there is a socially organized paraenesis, where moral exhortation is directed respectively to older men, older women, young women, young men, and slaves, a curious order which nonetheless reflects the diverse membership of the church. Finally, in Ti 3:10-11 there appears a summary of a disciplinary procedure to be exercised in the case of a man who is causing problems.<sup>87</sup>

When the commentators cite church order as the main theme of the Pastorals, more often than not they focus their attention on those passages in the Pastorals

84. See 1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Ti 3:8.

85. 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Ti 1:4.

86. See 2 Tim 2:2, 15, 24; 4:1-2; Ti 2:1; etc.

87. See 1 Tim 1:20. Bas van Iersel makes the point that, with the exception of the Pastorals, the New Testament assigns responsibility for making decisions to the assembled community. See B. van IERSEL, "Who according to the New Testament has the say in the church?," *Concilium* 148 (1981) 11-17.

which focus on church order in a narrow, almost canonical sense, namely organization, ministry,<sup>88</sup> and succession in ministry.<sup>89</sup> These topics come readily to mind because of the extensive passages on bishops (1 Tim 3: 1–7), deacons (1 Tim 3: 8–13), elders (1 Tim 5: 17–21), and widows (1 Tim 5: 3–16) in the first letter to Timothy, the longest of the three Pastorals. To a large extent these passages highlight the qualifications of those in ministerial positions within the church, specifically “bishops” and “deacons”, but they also focus on their responsibilities. Each of these passages deserves extensive comment but the purposes of the present exposition cause me to limit my remarks to but four reflections. First of all, there is not adequate distinction between bishops and elders. If the offices are not identical, they at least overlap.<sup>90</sup> Secondly, provision is made for the support of and respect due to elders. Thirdly, 1 Tim 3: 11 seems to indicate the presence of female deacons in the local community.<sup>91</sup> Fourthly, the detail of the author’s instructions on widows may indicate that the enrollment of widows was a relatively new institution at Ephesus.<sup>92</sup>

From time to time the Pastorals mention prophecy and prophets, thereby indicating that charismatic function was not absent from a church that was becoming relatively well-recognized. Among the somewhat ambiguous references to prophets are 1 Tim 1: 18 and 4: 14 where prophetic utterance seems to have had a role in Timothy’s “ordination.”<sup>93</sup> The ritual gesture used was that of a laying on of hands. While this gesture is attributed to the council of elders in 1 Tim 4: 14, it is restricted to Paul in 2 Tim 1: 16. This latter passage may well be an example of the apostolic reductionism which characterizes the Pastorals in so many different ways.

## JOHN

While the Johannine trajectory within the New Testament is quite distinct from the Pauline one, the difference is easily recognized when one looks first to the

88. See André LEMAIRE, “The Ministries in the New Testament. Recent Research,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 3 (1973) 133–166, pp. 159–161.

89. The concern for ministerial succession is expressed not only in such classical passages as 1 Tim 1: 18; 4: 14; and 2 Tim 1: 16, but also in the listing of qualifications of bishops and deacons and the author’s fashion of portraying the relationship between Paul and Timothy or Titus. Moreover H. BJORGE holds that the reference to Paul’s cloak in 2 Tim 4: 13 is an allusion to apostolic succession. See H. BJORGE, “El poncho de San Pablo. Una posible alusion a la sucesion apostolica en II Timoteo 4, 13,” *Revista Biblica* 42 (1980) 209–224.

90. See J.N.D. KELLY, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. Harper’s New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper & Row, 1963) p. 13, and Raymond E. BROWN, “*Episkopē* and *Episkopos*: The New Testament Evidence,” *Theological Studies* 41 (1980) 322–338. Similarly, with regard to Phil 1: 1 and the writings of Polycarp of Smyrna, see PROKOPOS, “*Hē organōsis tēs ekklēsiās tōn Philippōn kata tēn apostolikēn kai metapostolikēn epochēn*. Hoi prebyteroi tēs ekklēsiās tōn Philippōn,” *Deliton Biblikon Meleton* 9 (1980) 58–62. See, further, Pierre BENOIT, “Les origines de l’épiscopat dans le Nouveau Testament,” in *Exégèse et théologie*, 2. *Cogitatio Fidei*, 2 (Paris: Cerf, 1961) pp. 230–246.

91. See J.N.D. KELLY, *op. cit.*, pp. 83–84; R.E. BROWN, “*Episkope* and *Episkopos*,” p. 334.

92. Thus J.N.D. KELLY, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

93. See Jerome D. QUINN, “Ordination in the Pastoral Epistles,” *International Catholic Review/Communio* (1981) 358–369.

Pastorals and then to the Fourth Gospel in order to get a glimpse at the local church. While the Pastorals evidence a relatively high degree of church organization, quite the opposite is true of the Gospel of John. The difference of literary forms obviously has some role to play in this since the narrative, quasi-biographic, Gospel form does not easily lend itself to an analysis of the kind of church order it represents or promotes.<sup>94</sup> Admittedly the gospel form makes it difficult to formulate the precise structures of the Johannine community. Yet that difficulty should not lead one to affirm that the Fourth Gospel gives no evidence of ecclesiological insight, nor even that John represents a "low" ecclesiology in which ministerial office has not yet developed. Indeed contemporary scholarship, while principally attending to the development of the Johannine community,<sup>95</sup> seems to espouse a middle position<sup>96</sup> between those who would affirm that the Fourth Gospel is a patently ecclesiological text and those who would deny that it had any ecclesiological interest at all.<sup>97</sup>

It is, of course true, that the Fourth Gospel does not make use of the term *ekklēsia*. In this respect John does not stand alone among the canonical gospels, since the term is also absent from Mark and Luke. However the Fourth Gospel does not employ the variety of equivalent notions elsewhere utilized within the New Testament tradition to designate the church such as people of God, the saints, the saints of the assembly, the sons of the kingdom, the chosen, the called, Israel, heirs, body of Christ, etc.<sup>98</sup> Nonetheless the Gospel of John must be recognized as having its own ecclesiological terminology. The "we" of the Fourth Gospel<sup>99</sup> represents a well-defined group which is elsewhere qualified by characteristic and significant terminology. John Bogart has suggested that the *philoī* ("friends") of John 15:13-15 represents a self-designation of the early church.<sup>100</sup> Indeed the love commandment of

94. See D. Moody SMITH, "Theology and Ministry in John," in *Johannine Christianity: Essays on its Setting, Sources and Theology* (Columbia (SC): University of South Carolina Press, 1984) 190-222, p. 212.

95. Representative of this trend are such works as Raymond E. BROWN's *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist, 1979); Oscar CULLMANN's *The Johannine Circle* (London: SCM, 1976); and two works by J. Louis MARTYN, *The Gospel of John in Christian History* (New York: Paulist, 1968) and *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (2nd rev. ed.: Nashville, Abingdon, 1979).

96. Thus John F. O'GRADY, "Recent Developments in Johannine Studies," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 17 (1982) 54-58, p. 57. Robert Kysar suggests that in the decade which went from the mid-60s to the mid-70s discussions of Johannine ecclesiology most often were concerned with five themes: the dualistic view of the church and the world, the unity and mission of the church, the polemic nature of the church, and church order. See Robert KYSAR, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel: An Examination of Contemporary Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975) p. 241.

97. The classic proponent of this position is Rudolf Bultmann. See *The Gospel of John* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), a translation of the 1941 German-language work).

98. See Henri van den BUSSCHE, "The Church in the Fourth Gospel," in Jean GIBLET, ed., *The Birth of the Church: A Biblical Study* (Staten Island (NY): Alba House, 1968) 83-109, p. 83.

99. The twenty-nine instances of this use of the first person plural are found in John 1:14, 16, 45; 3:11; 4:22, 42; 6:5, 68, 69; 9:4; 11:11; 14:22; 16:30; 20:25; 21:24. For a schematic analysis of these passages see Godfrey NICHOLSON, *Death as Departure*. Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, 63 (Chico (CA): Scholars Press, 1983) p. 31.

100. See John BOGART, *Orthodox and Heretical Perfectionism in the Johannine Community as Evident in the First Epistle of John*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, 33 (Chico (CA): Scholars Press, 1977) p. 71.

John 13:34 characterizes the Johannine church as a love community in such a way that the passage can be construed as the constitution of the church. On the other hand, one could suggest that "the believers" is the most apt designation of the Johannine community. Commenting upon John 1:12, "But to all who received him who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God," one author has suggested that "by so designating itself the Johannine community identified itself as the heir to a role and standing that Israel had abdicated by its failure to receive the Son of God. This designation was rooted in Old Testament concepts... Reflecting the community's self-designation, it functions as a significant integrating theme for much of the Fourth Gospel."<sup>101</sup> D. Bruce Woll has written that one of the typical Johannine expressions for 'the church' is "all those whom the Father has given me."<sup>102</sup> In the words of Jacob Jervell, "The church may simply be characterized as consisting of those 'who are of the truth' i.e. those who believe that God speaks through Jesus and the events relating to him"<sup>103</sup> (10:3; 18:37). In sum, the ground of Johannine ecclesiology is the believer's relationship to Jesus and the effects thereof.<sup>104</sup>

Another distinctive aspect of Johannine ecclesiology is that the community appears to be a conventicle outside the mainstream of the Christian movement. Comparison of the Johannine with the Essene and Gnostic movements is illuminating in this regard. It appears that one can appropriately speak of the Johannine community as a sect.<sup>105</sup> In fact the glimpses into the Johannine community which can be obtained from a careful reading of the Gospel and the letters of John seem to indicate that the Johannine community satisfies the modern sociological profile of the sect.<sup>106</sup> While it is appropriate to speak of the sectarian character of the Johannine community, one ought thereby to emphasize the distinctiveness of the Johannine community rather than highlighting an etymologically-inspired notion of its having been "cut off." Analysis indicates that the Johannine community developed along its own independent trajectory rather than having been split off from the other Christian churches. In any case the particular understanding of Simon Peter and the Twelve which is found in the Fourth Gospel indicate that it was not an

101. John Painter suggests that believers were designated "children of God" in the source material. See J. PAINTER, "Christology and the History of the Johannine Community in the Fourth Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984) 460-474, p. 471.

102. D. Bruce WOLL, *Johannine Christianity in Conflict: Authority, Rank, and Succession in the First Farewell Discourse*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, 60 (Chico (CA): Scholars Press, 1981) p. 50.

103. Jacob JERVELL, *Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984) p. 65.

104. See T.E. POLLARD, "The Father-Son and God-Believer Relationships according to St. John: A Brief Study of John's Use of Prepositions," in M. de JONGE, ed., *L'Évangile de Jean*. Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 44 (Louvain: University Press, 1977) 363-369, p. 369.

105. Thus principally Ernst KÄSEMANN in *The Testament of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968) and Wayne MEEKS, "The Man From Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972) 44-72.

106. See especially, Fernando F. SEGOVIA, *Love Relationships in the Johannine Tradition*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, 58 (Chico (CA): Scholars Press, 1982) pp. 204-213. Segovia analyses the Johannine community with the help of the sociological categories of Peter Berger and Bryan Wilson.



apostolic foundation in the commonly understood sense of that term. The founder of the Johannine community was the Beloved Disciple<sup>107</sup> whom the Gospel places among the disciples and eye-witnesses of Jesus even if, seemingly, he was not one of the Twelve.

To speak of the Johannine community is also to speak of a charismatic community. As D. Bruce Woll has indicated the matter of authority, rank, and succession has been addressed in the first farewell discourse.<sup>108</sup> Discourse on the Paraclete serves to focus on the Spirit as the source and guarantor of authentic ministry within the Church. Indeed the preeminence given to the Spirit is significant in explaining the Fourth Gospel's apparent lack of interest in explicit sacramental ritual. While the discussion of the Johannine sacramentary which characterized a fair segment of Johannine scholarship in the 1960s has receded far into the background of scholarly interest, it is commonly accepted that the evangelist was far more interested in the significance of the sacramental rites than he was in the ritual itself.<sup>109</sup> Thus the discourse with Nicodemus (John 3: 1-15) highlights rebirth from above, being born of the Spirit, over and against rebirth through a water ritual. Similarly, even though there are manifest eucharistic traits in the Johannine description of the feeding of the five thousand (John 6: 1-14) it is clearly the meaning of the feeding that is important, as the two part discourse on the bread of life in the synagogue of Capernaum (John 6: 25-59) makes exceptionally clear.

#### ACTS

Yet another vision of church is provided by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, the New Testament writing to which previous generations of scholars had too rapid recourse as they attempted to comment upon the church in the New Testament era. When one looks to the Acts for a glimpse at the local church, one should bear in mind that "Luke elaborates no doctrine of *Church* — only once (9: 31) does the word *ekklēsia* have a meaning beyond 'local congregation' and it then simply covers the Church in Judea, Galilee and Samaria. We have once again to fall back upon scattered clues in the historical narrative."<sup>110</sup> To speak of Luke's text as an "historical narrative" is to urge caution on the part of the reader of Acts since Luke is a theologian as much as he is an historian. Indeed he offers his theological reflection in the guise of history. This is especially true when we consider the three summaries<sup>111</sup> in which Luke portrays the religious and social life of the first Christian community in Jerusalem, i.e., Acts 2: 42-27; 4: 32-35; 5: 12-16.

107. See, especially, R. Alan CULPEPPER, *The Johannine School: An Evaluation of the Johannine-School Hypothesis Based on an Investigation of the Nature of Ancient Schools*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, 26 (Missoula (MT): Scholars Press, 1975).

108. D. Bruce WOLL, *op. cit.* Within the letters attributed to John such passages as 3 John 9 clearly indicate that the Johannine community was troubled by problems relating to church order.

109. See Robert KYSAR, *op. cit.*, pp. 249-259; John O'GRADY, *art. cit.*, p. 58.

110. Ernst HAENCHEN, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) p. 93.

111. Space limitations force me to use but these three summaries as a vantage point for a glimpse at the local church from the Lukan perspective. A more extensive survey can be found in A. RODRIGUEZ CARMONA, "La comunidad cristiana a la luz de los escritos de Lucas," *Communio* 14 (1981) 311-344.

While literary analysis requires the commentator to distinguish between tradition and redaction in his (or her) study of each of these units of material, hermeneutics requires that one consider these three summaries, taken together, to provide an ideal image of what it means to be church together, what it means for the church to be *koinōnia*.<sup>112</sup> The key to understanding this image is the dialectic between charism and ministry, between the gift of the spirit and life in community. In this respect, Lucien Legrand has noted that Luke has connected the story of a charismatic outpouring on the church with the spread of the word of God and the *koinōnia*, expressed in the sharing of goods.<sup>113</sup>

The first of the Lukan ecclesial summaries, Acts 2:42–47, focuses on the community's religious and cultic life.<sup>114</sup> Four characteristics of the community's life emerge from Luke's portrayal.<sup>115</sup> First, there is the apostles teaching (*hē didachē tōn apostolōn*), both in the sense of fidelity to the apostolic tradition and in the sense of the proclamation of that tradition. A second characteristic of the church is its *koinōnia*, its communal life expressed in the sharing of goods. A third characteristic of this community is "the breaking of the bread" (*hē klasis tou artou*). In context the expression designates something other than an ordinary meal, most probably the Christian eucharist. Finally, this idealized community is portrayed as a community at prayer, as a community which prayerfully invokes the name of God. In fact, these four characteristics are listed by Luke in 2:42, then graphically expanded in vv. 43–47 and encompassed by two reflections which provide the Lukan appreciation of the reaction to the witness provided by the church.

Luke likewise adds (vv. 36–47) a description of the reaction to the witness of the church to his second summary. This summary (Acts 4:32–35) centers on the communal and social life of the church. The summary is manifestly Lukan, reflecting not only the Lukan concern for and solidarity with the poor, but also the central role of the apostles in the life of the early church. Moreover the summary seems to represent an amalgam of biblical imagery and Hellenistic terminology. Given the literary form of the passage, i.e. as a summary, the pericope hardly represents a radical communism as the *de facto* way of life of the church of Jerusalem. Rather it portrays the life of charity and solidarity with the poor as a vital expression of acceptance of the kerygma that the Lord is risen.

112. See Joseph LESCRAUWAET, "Koinonia. L'assemblée comme signe caractéristique de l'identité du groupe des chrétiens," *Questions liturgiques* 65 (1984) 85–97. To a large extent Lescrauwaet bases his reflections upon an analysis of Acts 2:41–47.

113. See L. LEGRAND, "The Structure of Acts 2: The Integral Dimensions of the Charismatic Movement according to Luke," *Indian Theological Studies* 19 (1982) 193–209, and Hanneliese STEICHEL, "Geist und Amt als kirchenbildende Elemente in der Apostelgeschichte," in Josef HAINZ, ed., *Kirche im Werden: Studien zum Thema Amt und Gemeinde im Neuen Testament* (Munich: Schöningh, 1976) 185–203.

114. See also Acts 13:1–3 and O. KNOCK, "'In der Gemeinde von Antiochia gab es Propheten und Lehrer' (Apg 13,1). Was sagt der Neue Testament über urchristliche Wortgottesdienst und deren Leiter," *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 32 (1982) 133–150.

115. See Robrecht MICHELS, "The 'Model of Church' in the First Christian Community of Jerusalem: Ideal and Reality," *Louvain Studies* 10 (1984–1985) 303–323.

The final ecclesial summary (Acts 5:12–16) found in the first part of Acts <sup>116</sup> highlights the important role played by the apostles, especially by Peter. This is illustrated by the honor paid to the apostles and exemplified by the miracles (*sēmeia kai terata*) which they performed. These miracles manifestly characterize the twelve as charismatic figures. Once again Luke highlights the impression that the church — in this instance, through its foundational element — had made: “more than ever believers were added to the Lord” (v. 14).

These three summaries must be taken together. They present us with a summarized, generalized, and idealized profile of the early church at Jerusalem. This idealized church is, in Luke’s vision, not only the mother church. It is also the model church, the paradigm for all local churches. It is a church founded on the charismatic teaching and miraculous activity of the apostles. It is an assembly that comes together in prayer and eucharist because it has accepted the kerygmatic announcement of the Lord’s death and resurrection with a commitment to the communal life. This church is a *koinōnia*, the Lord’s community in which he remains until the times are fulfilled.

Luke’s *koinōnia* is an ideal. If we are not only challenged but somewhat frustrated by the realization that the local churches of our times do not correspond to that ideal, we have only to realize that it has ever been thus. Neither the Pauline community at Corinth nor the community under the hegemony of the Beloved Disciple corresponded to the Lukan ideal. Yet Paul and the Johannine author have also given us a glimpse of local churches during the New Testament times. These too are part of our tradition and normative for ecclesial existence.

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116. Acts 2:1–8:30.